Living the Good Life at a Liberal Arts College

Gizem Karaali

Department of Mathematics
Pomona College
Claremont, CA

PIMS-Math Job Forum for
Postdoctoral Fellows and
Graduate Students
Prelude

Some day, a long time ago ...

I was an enthusiastic graduate student in mathematics.
Today, I am older but no wiser …

and yet the trip so far has been amazingly delicious!
Some things you should know...

**WORKLOAD**
- Teaching load is typically 2-3 courses per term.
- Classes are (mostly) small (10-30) ... 
- ... but your students will come to office hours!
Some things you should know...  

COLLEAGUES

- Most will not be in your research area.
- They are quite interesting people...
- ... and you can eventually find / develop common (research and non-research) interests.
Some things you should know...

RESEARCH

• At some places the appropriate word is “scholarship”.
• Some places have incentives for productive faculty...
• ... but not all have sponsored research offices.
Applying: your cover letter

- Make it clear that you know something about liberal arts colleges.
- Highlight any teaching awards or unusual experiences.
- Mention any faculty whose research might align with yours.
- Address all requests/questions posed in the job announcement.
Applying: your teaching statement

- This is an important part of your application.
- We are not looking for people who know everything about teaching. We are looking for reflective teachers who are working to improve themselves.
- If you have done anything interesting in the classroom, tell us. If there are some new teaching ideas you would love to try, tell us.
- It helps to describe a teaching challenge that you overcame.
Applying: your research statement

- Give a compelling introduction readable by non-experts. (This can get you a job!)
- Since you might be isolated in your field, show that you have a plan for sustainable future work.
- Make sure you have thought about whether and if so how you can engage undergraduates in your work.
Applying: your recommendation letters

- Make sure you have at least one person write about your teaching (and hopefully not just saying that you give good math talks).
- It helps to have multiple people mention your teaching if possible.
- We do want to know about your research!
The Interview

- Make your job talk accessible!
  - All of it (if possible).
  - To undergraduates (and not just the seniors).
  - It need not contain all of your cutting-edge research.

- You might teach a class. It is important. Including something interactive or collaborative is a plus.

- Be ready to explain your research to people (including the president) outside of the math dept.

- Ask us questions!
For more on liberal arts colleges . . .

Good Luck!